

In speaking of man's wickedness, it is to be taken into account, as a third limitation, that he is not so corrupt that he cannot become loose. Mankind are commonly not so depraved in their younger years as in after-life, when their vicious propensities have had time to expand. Man's natural depravity is more like the seed than the tree—it may be compared to the fountain rather than the stream.

But let no man congratulate himself upon the circumstance that he is not so wicked as he might possibly be. Man's liability to fall farther—his capacity for wickedness—is one of his most fearful characteristics. The depravity is often lurking within, when it has not yet appeared without; there exists the spark, which needs only to be fanned by the winds of temptation to break forth into a flame. Every one has not felt the more sinful passions in their greatest height and vehemence, but he may at least have experienced them in their commencing movements. No one has mingled much with mankind without being thrown into positions, sometimes for a longer and sometimes for a shorter space, in which his utmost exertions were required to keep his spirit from running wild into disorder or violence. On one occasion he may have felt a momentary wish to thwart a rival in business or in fame, who has wounded his vanity or darkened his prospects of success; at another time he may have felt disposed to exact revenge for an offence, real or imaginary; and again, he may have longed to obtain forbidden pleasure, of which he could taste without risk of detection. All of us must have felt these passions, or others equally dangerous, stirring within the bosom; and on such occasions, when the soul is tempest-tossed and stirred, we are permitted to discover depths which might otherwise have lain concealed in their own silent darkness. Such feelings would never spring up in a perfectly holy; they are indications of a deeply seated

depravity.

They are the initiatory or elementary states of those passions which carry men such far lengths in wickedness. They are like the heavy drops which sometimes come before the shower, like the strong gusts which precede the full fury of the coming tempest. They are the first heavings of an ocean, which may soon be tossed by the continuance of the same influence to its lowest profundities. Only allow them to increase—
only encourage them by indulgence—only add fuel to the fire—and